



**Statement of
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**Before the
Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing, Terrorism Risk Assessment
Committee on Homeland Security
House of Representatives**

**Concerning
“Making Homeland Security Intelligence Work for State, Local, and Tribal
Partners: An Interagency Threat Assessment Coordination Group (ITACG)
Progress Report”**

March 13, 2008

Chairwoman Harman, Ranking Member Reichert, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you to provide a report on our shared progress to strengthen the security of our nation by increasingly seamless integration between the Federal government and our State, local and tribal partners, most recently in the stand up of the Interagency Threat Assessment and Coordination Group or “ITACG”.

It is a privilege for me to carry this responsibility on behalf of the FBI, but having been part of this effort since it was first conceived, I know that any progress we have made has been the result of a professional working partnership with my colleagues on this panel: the Program Manager for the Information Sharing Environment, Ambassador Thomas E. McNamara, Acting Director for the National Counterterrorism Center

(NCTC), Mr. Michael Leiter and Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis at the Department of Homeland Security, Mr. Charlie Allen.

I believe the Interagency Threat Assessment and Coordination Group (ITACG) is well-postured to meet the letter and spirit of the direction we have received from the President and this Congress. The ITACG is already demonstrating a potential beyond that purposeful intent, and in my view is an effective and complimentary adjunct to other positive developments in the information sharing environment.

The path to where we are today has included its share of debates and disagreements, but in my view that dialog was a necessary element of building a way forward that would take hold. That dialog helped clarify and strengthen our shared resolve to empower the ITACG in a way that would make it relevant to the fight; in a way that would add value and not just volume; in a way that extended full and necessary access without compromising the independence of the State, local and tribal members of the group, and in a way that preserves the responsibility we all share to protect the rights and civil liberties of the American people. That dialog and the stand-up of the ITACG has created an opportunity to move past anecdotes and preconceived notions into a live, operationally-relevant laboratory where the State, local and tribal point of view intersects directly with the corpus of counterterrorism information held by the United States Government.

Most importantly, I believe the stand-up of the ITACG and the structuring of its roles and responsibilities requires striking the right balance between enabling information sharing without building bureaucracy or layers that would only cloud an already complex and dynamic environment. While measures of access, numbers of reports, and the impact

of those reports will be a necessary and early dimension of demonstrating value for investment, I believe the most important measure of success for the ITACG will be the extent to which their work has an impact in shifting mindsets and culture throughout the information sharing environment. When the practices enabled through the ITACG become systemic, when we no longer have to ask “did the ITACG chop on this” because we know the dialogue and exchange is full and pervasive, then we will have achieved the level of success that is matched to the challenges we face. This will take time, but it is a goal I believe we should continually aspire toward.

As you have heard from my colleagues, the access of ITACG personnel is well matched to their mission. They have the ability, through that access, to discover and surface items of interest; to impact priorities; to shape the course of a developing narrative; and to revisit previously published information—including information produced by intelligence agencies independent of NCTC involvement.

NCTC leadership has given ITACG a seat in one of the Intelligence Community’s most important forums – the daily counterterrorism video conference. Within this forum ITACG can gain awareness and context on threats and trends at the same time those perspectives are being shared with the Director of NCTC. This same forum sets much of the Community’s daily agenda for counterterrorism matters and now – by extension through the ITACG – we have the potential to better synchronize the respective focus between the national and local response.

The ITACG has also impacted and informed more effective means to make information available to the constituents they represent. Acting Director Leiter highlights in his statement a number of actions that will continue to enhance the availability of

information that has been highlighted or shaped by the ITACG. This extends to providing information that is releasable and actionable for law enforcement and public safety officials on the street.

In my view the ITACG Advisory Council, chaired by Under Secretary Allen, is an effective and open forum for the exchange of ideas, the timely approval of decisions and the necessary pressure to impart urgency for participating members to deliver on expectations. Although the work of the ITACG is only a few months underway, the Council is already taking up lessons learned from the stand-up as they relate to recruiting and identifying State, local and tribal members, obtaining their security clearances in a timely manner; addressing the administrative requirements of their assignment to the ITACG and how best to receive feedback. There are a number of other issues that need to be addressed, many of them captured well in the statements by Acting Director Leiter and Under Secretary Allen. I believe we have the forum and mindset to address them expeditiously and in keeping with the goals of the ITACG. The FBI is committed to working in the established forum to resolve these issues in a manner that provides clarity, but does not inhibit the need for flexibility.

A secondary benefit of the activities related to the stand-up and sustenance of the ITACG has been the forcing function and forums this has created to work through issues that are relevant in other information sharing domains. The ITACG is clarifying the way forward in other areas, like our goal for a common approach to integration with Fusion Centers.

In closing, let me again thank this Committee for your leadership, creativity and persistence in setting high standards of accountability for this unprecedented undertaking.

Let me also thank my colleagues here for working to reflect the spirit that is expected of all of us by the citizens we are sworn to serve and protect. The FBI stands ready to continue to do its part to honor, by our actions, the memory of those who have sacrificed so much since September 11, 2001.

I look forward to our continued engagement.